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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Fred Horvat

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~ Costly Facebook Surfing ~ People Are Talking! ~ Monster Is Phished!
~ ACEC Show Approaching! ~ New Click-Fraud Site! ~ Old Worm 'Slammer'!
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~ Be Born, Get Domain! ~ ~ Sleepy? Cut Out Web!

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-* Talking With The Candidates Online! *-
-* Atari Introduces Pong To A New Generation! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"

If you make any attempt to follow the headlines these days, you might be interested in Joe's commentary this week! I happen to share his views on this subject, but I'll let him tell the story!

A lot of family issues happening around here, both good and bad. It was tough trying not to dwell on the negative, but something happened, outside of these issues, that got me in a better frame of mind.

If making long-term friendships during your Atari experience was an enjoyable one, you may be able to relate. Out of the blue last week, I received a card from my alma mater's alumni office. Nothing strange in that - I usually hear from them a couple of times a year during their annual fund-raising times, as well as other events. However, this time was different. Just from looking at the envelope, I knew that this was different. Not only was the card addressed to me, but it was addressed using my nickname. The alumni relations person doesn't know me, so where did that come from?

Opening it up, it appears that some of my college radio station buddies have been trying to contact me to set up a mini-reunion at this year's "homecoming" reunion. Since my personal information is confidential, this guy was passing on the request, and left me some contact info that he was provided. So, I sent an e-mail to one guy - it's been 32 years! We then talked on the phone a couple of days later. Must have been for at least an hour! A lot of old memories came back to life! I'm also waiting to hear back from some of the others. I don't know whether or not I'll make the trip up to upstate New York, but I'd like to see these guys again. Like some of my numerous Atari buddies that I've met and grown to know well over the years, it's always great to renew old friendships. We'll see what happens!

Until next time...

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->A-ONE User Group Notes! - Meetings, Shows, and Info!

ACEC Vintage Computer and Video Game Swap Meet

ATARI COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS
OF COLUMBUS, OHIO
VINTAGE COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAME SWAP MEET

September 8, 2007
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. EDT
Oakland Park Community Center
980 Lenore St.

All vintage and classic computers, video games, systems, accessories, games, and software invited!

Vendor and Flea Marketeer donation: Free!
Shoppers and onlookers donation: Free!

Further info:
chwbr...@ee.net Charles (614) 447-9789
rar...@columbus.rr.com

http://www.angelfire.com/oh4/acec/acec.html

Classic Computer and Video Game items for Sale/Trade
http://fmhcentral.freeservers.com/

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I don't know about you, but I've missed getting together like this for the past couple of weeks. I apologize, but there just weren't enough messages in the NewsGroup to justify a column.

For the past couple of weeks, unless you live on the Moon or something, you've been hearing about Michael Vick and the allegations of dog fighting, training dogs for fighting, and killing underperforming dogs. You may also know that I'm a 'dog person', so you know what's coming, right?

Yep, I think Vick should be strung up (figuratively, that is) and left to swing in the town square. Now, before all of this began, I couldn't have told you who Michael Vick was, what he did for a living, who he did it for, or what color he was. These are all non-sequiturs. What he does for a living or where he does it has nothing to do with his breaking the law.

Now, I believe that dog fighting is just plain wrong, and I'll explain

why. It’s not just because it’s vicious or because it often results in the death of one or both of the contestants, but because it’s unnatural for dogs.

Okay, right now you’re probably saying, "but I’ve SEEN dogs fight all on their own...", and you’re right. Dogs fight. It’s how they determine who’s going to be the leader of the pack, and who’s going to be the follower. But the number one rule for a pack leader is that you’ve got to leave your followers ALIVE and ready, willing and able to do what needs to be done. Dogs, left on their own, will fight to establish dominance, and leave it at that. They don’t fight to the death amongst themselves. That’s the legacy of living in a pack.

When you take a dog... and I don’t care what breed it is... and teach it to kill another dog, you’re not really ’teaching’ it anything. Dogs are hunters. They already know how to kill. What you’re really doing is training it to be a bad pack member. That’s why their ’training’ is often so intense. You’re making them do something that goes against what they’re hard-wired to do, and that takes a lot of effort.

Making an animal (even a human animal, by the way) accept something that’s so against what’s ingrained in them causes unbalanced psychological states. You’re pretty much short-circuiting what evolution has created, and that creates unstable, unhappy creatures that can and will display a wide range of problems like obsessive-compulsive behavior, blind aggression and rage, and self-destructive behavior like biting one’s self or scratching its skin raw.

The wonderful thing about dogs... and the reason that I’m so taken with them... is that nothing is really permanent. Handled by someone who understands them and what they’ve been through and is willing to give them the time they need to heal, I’d be willing to bet that every one of the 50 or so of the dogs found in various stages of ’training’ on Vick’s property could be rehabilitated to lead happy, normal lives.

I’ve encountered pit bulls who’ve been trained as killer fighting dogs and I can tell you that underneath that thin layer of ’killer’ is a solid core of ’pack member’. You’ll never see a happier dog than a rehabilitated fighting dog. Sure, you might not want to leave them alone with your toy poodle right away, but dogs are amazing for the fact that they seem to yearn for normalcy and will take direction from you if you’re their leader, no matter what’s happened to them in the past. Dogs find it much easier to ’just let go’ of all the baggage that we humans seem to hang on to eternally.

Now, there have been lots of people whining about the charges against Vick being racially biased. This really makes me sick. What would be biased would be to say, "well, he’s black, so it’s okay". I’ve said this often, in many situations, and to many people on many subjects: If something is wrong, it’s wrong regardless of who you are.

As I’ve already said, when I first heard about this case, I had no idea who Michael Vick was. When I heard about this guy who reportedly killed ’under-performing’ animals, I didn’t think "it must be a black man", I thought "that lousy bastard".

Having SEEN Michael Vick on television, with his $1200.00 suit and his $50.00 lawyer, walking out of the courtroom with the look of entitlement oozing off of him, I just wanted to smack the smug look off

his head.

To be honest, I'd need a tranquilizer gun and a baseball bat to do it, but that's not the point. This guy's got a look on his mug that's kind of a cross between O.J. Simpson (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/2/2d/OJSimpson.jpg) and Michael Skakel (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/f/f9/Ms-2000A.jpg). It's a look that says, "Yeah? Waddaya gonna do about it? I'm special."

Well folks, I've got news for him: he's not special. I don't care what color he is, where he came from, or how much money he makes. And it makes me sick to hear people throwing up excuses and throwing down the race card. But I should have known better, I guess. We've seen far too much of people like Al Sharpton lately... you know the type... people who can grovel and strut at the same time, who can claim self-reliance while demanding special treatment.

Maybe you've heard about the movement to get people to send their "Vick" football jerseys to their local Humane Society chapter to be used in cleaning poop out of dog cages? I've got a very good friend who's daughter is an animal advocate, who wanted to make a statement about all of this, but wasn't a football fan, and didn't have a 'Vick' football jersey. So what did she do? The crafty little thing won one on eBay and had it sent directly to her local Humane Society.

Yeah, it's a cute idea, and it makes a statement, I guess. But I think a better statement would have been, "Here. Here's 20 bucks. Save a dog and try to find it a good home."

Well, enough of that. Let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Fred Horvat posts:

"It?s almost that time again.

ATARI COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS
OF COLUMBUS, OHIO
VINTAGE COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAME SWAP MEET

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Shoppers and onlookers donation: Free!

Further info:
chwbrown@ee.net   Charles   (614) 447-9789
rarenz@columbus.rr.com

http://www.angelfire.com/oh4/acec/acec.html "

Jason Harmon asks about TOS 1.4 chips:

"Does anyone has a spare 2-chip set of U.S. TOS 1.4 ROMs that they would be willing to sell? I have a 6 chip set, but unfortunately my 1040STFM is a later model that uses 2 ROM chips."

'Charlie' tells Jason:

"I'm pretty sure i have them , call you email me the reference or part # (usually c0-0259 or whatever) so I can check , ...I live in Canada ..will post to you cheap!!"

Rodolphe Czuba adds:

"As far as I know, Tos 1.4 was never officially released as two 1Mbits ROMS of 28 pins.

You can only find it as 6 ROM of 256Kbits (28 pins too).... if you find it... only some MEGA ST 1's were released with this TOS..

If you program yourself an 1Mbits EPROM, it is a 32 pins chips and you will so need to adapt some line between the 2 of the 6 sockets of the STF and the 2 EPROMS... Not very difficult but some soldering...

The better way is to program the 1.4 in 6 EPROMS of 256Kbits... no modifications and no soldering..."

Edward Baiz tells Jason to...

"Try Best Electronics or B&C Computers. They should have it."

Djordje Vukovic posts this about TeraDesk:

"Version 3.93 of TeraDesk open-source desktop for the 16-bit and 32-bit lines of Atari computers is available at:

      http://solair.eunet.yu/~vdjole/teradesk.htm

This release fixes some bugs that were noticed shortly after the release of the previous version. See the history file for more information."

Mark Bedingfield tells Djordje:

"If only M$ could bug fix this fast. You're doing it faster than I can install it! [chuckle]"

Djordje replies:

"My point of view is that it is better to have a new version available after each small improvement, than to have long intervals between

monumental revisions. In this way it is easier to track down any problems as they arise, and a number of users is more likely to come upon any existing bug than a single maintainer.

Fortunately, it is easy to 'install' a new release of TeraDesk- one just have to copy four files to their locations (program itself, resource file, hypertext help and its reference), start the program and save the desktop."

'Jao' asks about finding his STe's floppy controller chip:

"I'm trying to upgrade my STe for 1.4MB operation, and just wondering where the floppy controller IC is? There are quite a few Atari labeled chips, so wondering if its rebadged in someway.

Just hoping its not under the accelerator board as that will be awkward..."

Jao does some sleuthing and then answers his own question:

"My Ste seems to be fitted with the Ajax chip which was why I couldn't identify it."

Jason Harmon asks about peoples' preferences for a command line interpreter:

"I have seen and used a few command line interfaces for TOS, and know there where quite a few made. Does anyone have an opinion they could share about what the best CLI for TOS is? Are there any that run from within a GEM window (or a desktop accessory) as opposed to full-screen?"

Bernd Mueller tells Jason:

"If you have some memory left on your st(e)/tt/falcon/Milan, or whatever, and a hdd then you can use bash/tos2win which is the best cli in my humble opinion. Just install a small sparemint/easymint setup and enjoy typing."

Mark Mallett adds his thoughts:

"I dunno about best, but I wrote a toy shell that suited me pretty well most of the time. For anyone who is curious, I've put the documentation here: http://www.geezer.org/sw/atari-st/cm110/ "

Djordje Vukovic adds:

"There was one named Command! by Intrinsic Software which ran as a desktop accessory- in a window. Unfortunately I have only a demo with some crucial commands disabled- if you find a full version somewhere, please let me know.

Another one that runs as an accessory (but fullscreen) is named Shell. Of this I have a full working version.

In my opinion, all such small CLI programs are quite limited and permit only very basic manipulation with files- e.g. in script (batch) files made for them most probably you will not be able to make conditional tests, call other batch files, etc."

Dave Wade tells Jason:

"I have experimented with a few, and they all have "pros" and "cons". I really like Gulam but it only runs in full screen. On the other hand you can drop in and out of the built in micro emacs simply. I am also sure there is some way to run GEM programs from the command line....

Then as others have said there is mupfel. I had some issues with this, but I can't remember what they were. I think they were to do with the handling of wild cards and files with no extension.

Lastly if you have cash there is a CLI in Magic. Again OK, but not for the small machine you have..."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Atari Introduces Pong To A New Generation!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Wii Sales Surpass Xbox 360 Lifetime Shipments
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Atari Introduces Pong To A New Generation

New York gamemaker Atari Inc. says it is developing PSP versions of classic Atari games like Asteroids, Centipede, Missile Command, Super Breakout and Pong.

Developed by Stainless Games Ltd., the Atari Classics Evolved series is

scheduled for a fall release.

These titles, presented in both an original and an evolved version, maintain the original game-play, while adding "beautifully rendered, up-to-date graphics," Atari said.

"We are looking forward to providing gamers with the experience of the iconic Atari catalog on a handheld platform," Atari producer Matt Rush said in a statement. "Offering these Atari classics in both their elemental and contemporary forms should excite both old-school and next-generation gamers alike."

In addition to the evolved classics, more than 60 original Atari 2600 titles, such as Yar’s Revenge, Night Driver, Canyon Bomber and Crystal Castles, will also be made available.

Wii Sales Surpass Xbox 360 Lifetime Shipments

Wii worldwide sales are making history. According to VG Chartz, Wii sales passed up lifetime Xbox 360 sales in less than a year. That makes the Wii the fastest-selling console in the chronicles of video games.

VG Chartz’s assessment is based on sample data from retailers all over the world. That data shows the Wii sold 10.57 million consoles as of August 23. By comparison, the Xbox 360 has sold 10.51 million units by that date. The figures look close until you consider that the Wii was launched one year later than the Xbox 360.

The accomplishment is a double honor, marking the first time since 1994 the same company has been the leader in the home console and handheld markets. Nintendo is repeating history, then, as its Super NES and Gameboy dominated their respective markets in 1994.

The Nintendo Wii has met incredible success due to multiple factors that brewed a perfect storm, according to Ted Pollak, president of San Francisco-based EE Fund Management, a video game industry focused investment partnership. Pollak has been following the sector for 20 years and is also senior game industry analyst at Jon Peddie Research.

"The revolutionary controller was obviously an important part of the buzz surrounding the Wii - being the first worldwide-recognized gaming input device to utilize accelerometers," he said. "Beyond the buzz, the controller has delivered being an effective and fun input device."

Another important factor in Wii’s success is the "evergreen franchise" power of the Nintendo game character intellectual property. Many fans would purchase almost any machine Nintendo manufactured just so they can play the games with Mario and Zelda, Pollak explained. Of course, the Wii’s low price didn’t hurt its chances in the marketplace, either.

Not all of the elements contributing to the perfect storm are so obvious, though. Some subtle factors are also at play, such as slower-than-anticipated adoption of HD televisions by console gamers. Both the PlayStation 3 and the Xbox 360 offer high-resolution graphics. While both of these machines will work with a regular TV, gamers cannot experience the high-res graphics without an HD television.

"Assuming an HD television costs $350, this effectively increased the 'real cost' of the systems to around $700 for the 360 and $850 for the PS3," Pollak said. "The high-res consoles in my opinion are incredible values even with the cost of the HD TV, but there are tens of millions of console gamers who I believe simply can't afford that price level. The Wii was built for a standard-definition television."

The Wii also has a wide appeal. The games and the act of playing games on the Wii appeal to females, nongamers, and seniors - significantly expanding the potential market for this console, according to Pollak. What's more, Pollak said he believes all the analyst predictions about a two-horse race between Sony and Microsoft gave Wii the underdog advantage.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Candidates And Voters To Converse Online

Lecterns are so 2004.

In the latest chapter of new Web-empowered debates and interaction with presidential candidates, social networking site MySpace and MTV will bring together 2008 hopefuls and young voters for real-time online conversations.

The announced front-running candidates of both parties will participate, each holding individual dialogues with voters. Voters can instant-message, e-mail or text their questions in real-time during the events, which will be webcast live on MTV.com and MySpaceTV.com.

To be held September through December, the 11 dialogues will each last about one hour and include real-time polling that rates the online audience's response to the candidates' answers. During their chats, candidates will typically be located on college campuses.

"This is not a debate," said MTV spokesman Ian Rowe. "Each one of these dialogues is an opportunity for young people both on a college campus - as well as millions watching via a live stream on MySpace and MTV.com - to have a one-on-one, direct, unfiltered conversation with each candidate."

The discussions will be unfiltered to a degree. There will still be a moderator choosing the questions, aided by a group of political experts and an MTV News correspondent. About 100 to 200 students will be able to physically attend the discussions, the locations of which will be announced the day they're held.

Former Sen. John Edwards will hold the first dialogue on Sept. 27 in New Hampshire.

Other Democrats taking part are: Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Sen. Chris Dodd, Sen. Barack Obama, and Gov. Bill Richardson.

Participating Republicans are: Former Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Rep. Ron Paul, Rep. Duncan Hunter, Sen. John McCain, Sen. Sam Brownback, and former Gov. Mitt Romney.

Townhall-style debates have been the traditional model of face-to-face candidate-voter interaction, but the growth of social networking Web sites has caused an updating of the format. In July, CNN and video-sharing Web site YouTube partnered to hold a Democratic debate where people could contribute their questions by uploading a video from anywhere.

The debate attracted 2.6 million television viewers on CNN, a slight drop from MSNBC's conventional debate in June. A Republican debate with CNN and YouTube is scheduled for Nov. 28.

But the MySpace-MTV dialogues are meant to provide a different experience.

"We very much want to take the Iowa or New Hampshire living room global," said Jeff Berman, general manager of MySpaceTV, referring to where the first primaries for the presidential election are held.

"It's much more akin to the conversation that happens around the dining-room table in Nashua (N.H.) or at the state fair in Iowa rather than on a stage with a dozen candidates all trying to squeeze in their consultant-crafted sound bites," Berman added.

The dialogues are a new direction for MTV's "Choose or Loose" campaign, which was launched in 1992 as a way to encourage young people to vote. MTV is owned by Viacom Inc.

In March, MySpace, owned by News Corp., launched the Impact Channel, a section dedicated to the 2008 presidential election where candidates' profiles appear: http://impact.myspace.com. MySpace will hold a presidential primary by taking user votes Jan. 1 and 2.

Facebook Surfers Cost Their Bosses Billions

Workers surfing the Internet social networking site Facebook could be costing their employers billions of dollars in lost productivity, an analysis by an Internet security firm said on Monday. Facebook is the latest Internet networking craze, with more than 230,000 Australians already signed up and reports of more than 100 new users every hour.

Internet security company SurfControl looked at the phenomenon, and found Australian workers who keep a close watch on their Facebook profile page were costing their employers up to A$5 billion ($4 billion) a year.

"People love being there and telling people what they are doing right now, what their thoughts are right at this second," SurfControl chairman Richard Cullen told Australian radio.

"It's so interactive that people just get addicted to watching their Facebook groups all the time."

Facebook allows friends to keep in touch, post photos and monitor one

another’s moods and movements. It also enables people to meet others and form new social networks.

Cullen said his findings were based on a typical Facebook user, earning an average wage, spending an hour a day on line. He then calculated the cost to companies if one person in every organization spent an hour on Facebook instead of working.

"We got the extraordinary figure of A$5 billion," he said.

Cullen said banning Facebook from work computers was not necessarily the best way to combat time wasting, as the site encouraged socializing, which in turn made people happier to work longer hours.

($1=A$1.25)

Phishing Attack Plunders Job Site

A recently disclosed fraud involving hundreds of thousands of people on the Monster.com jobs Web site reveals the perils of leaving detailed personal information online, security analysts say.

Before the scheme was uncovered last week by researchers at Symantec Corp., con artists had filched legitimate user names and passwords from recruiters who search for job candidates on Monster. Then with access into the Monster system, the hackers grabbed resumes and used information on those documents to craft personalized "phishing" e-mails to job seekers.

"What phishers are trying to do these days is make them as realistic as possible, by adding specific information," said Patrick Martin, a Symantec product manager. "If they know you’ve submitted a resume to Monster, that makes it (seem) a little more legitimate."

If the recipients took the bait, they had spyware or other malicious programs secretly installed on their computers. But even if the phishing attempt wasn’t successful, the names, addresses and other details on the resumes can themselves be lucrative.

A server in the Ukraine used in the scheme held 1.6 million entries. Because of duplications, Symantec said those files actually held personal information for "several hundred thousand" job seekers. Another antivirus firm, Authentium Inc., said it parsed the same data and counted 1.2 million people.

Symantec said it relayed details to Monster.com so it could disable the compromised recruiter accounts. But the security company also advised Web users to limit their exposure to such frauds by reducing the amount of personal information they post on the Internet.

That advice was echoed in other corners. Ron O’Brien, senior security analyst for Sophos PLC, suggested that job seekers provide only minimal details about themselves on job sites, and then reveal deeper information only for queries that prove to be legitimate.

The same standards should apply on social networking sites such as Facebook that ask for a wealth of information, O’Brien said.

"With very little effort, I could put together a profile of you that includes such information as your home address, your home phone number, your e-mail address, your birthday," O'Brien said. "We need to kind of take a step back and decide whether it's really required for us to provide all the information requested of us. ... We have become a nation of people who want to be cooperative."

Other security specialists said Monster might share the blame if it doesn't ensure that people with access to its system use "strong" passwords that are frequently changed or hard to guess.

"They have a major responsibility when they have this information," said Laura Yecies, a vice president of Check Point Software Technologies Ltd.

Representatives for Monster Worldwide Inc., the New York-based parent company of the jobs site, did not return messages seeking comment.

On its Web site, the company advises its members to be extremely cautious about e-mails purporting to be from recruiters - advice that goes for all unsolicited messages.

To spot phishing attempts, look for misspellings or grammatical mistakes in the messages. Even if an e-mail passes that smell test, don't click on links in the e-mail or fill out forms asking for information. And if the message offers a deal that is too good to be true - such as easy money - it probably is.

London Man Arrested for 'Stealing' Wi-Fi

Police officers in London arrested a 39-year-old man using his laptop to access someone else's wireless Internet connection on Tuesday. His actions could potentially breach the Computer Misuse Act and the Communications Act, according to a Metropolitan Police Service statement. A spokesman for the Metropolitan Police confirmed the arrest on Thursday.Two Police Community Support Officers spotted the man using the computer as he sat on a garden wall in the West London suburb of Chiswick. When they questioned him, he admitted using an unsecured Wi-Fi connection. PCSOs do not have the same powers as regular police officers, and so had to wait for other officers to arrest him. British Police forces use PCSOs to reassure the public and tackle antisocial behavior: they spend most of their time on foot patrol.The man was later released on police bail, and must return to the police station in Chiswick on Oct. 11Dishonestly obtaining electronic communication services is an offense under Section 125 of the U.K. 2003 Communications Act, while unauthorized access to computer material is a summary offense under Section 1 of the 1990 Computer Misuse Act. It's not the first time someone has been arrested or prosecuted for such an offense, the spokesman for the Metropolitan Police said. However, neither offense is considered sufficiently serious for statistical analysis, so he could not say how many such arrests had been made. Tellingly, the spokesman could not recall any successful convictions for illegally using broadband Internet connections. In July, local media reported that West Mercia Police had cautioned, but not arrested, two people in separate incidents in Redditch, England, for illegally using private Wi-Fi networks, but staff there could not say whether this was part of a concerted campaign against Wi-Fi thieves.Officials at the Crown Prosecution Service and the Home Office also said they did not track such

offenses separately.

Old Worm Slammer Threatens Again

An old worm known as Slammer, which originated back in January 2003, is still going strong according to Gunter Ollmann, director of security strategy at IBM’s Internet Security Systems (IBM ISS).

Ollmann, the author of the white paper "Old threats never die", says that Slammer is still the threat most commonly encountered by IBM ISS.

But it isn’t just high-profile vulnerabilities and malware that are a problem, Ollmann said. In effect, the security industry is now witnessing a snowball effect, where threats are accumulating at an "exponential" rate, and it isn’t really possible to eradicate any of those threats.

"Organizations need to be aware that old threats never actually retire from the digital landscape," Ollmann wrote in the white paper. "Rather, they tend to become background noise on the Internet - ready to burst into life with each new software update, host recovery, device deployment or embedded system release."

The problem is that many of the protection mechanisms companies rely on, like signature-based security software, are no longer able to keep up with the rate at which new threats are appearing.

That’s worsened by the fact that whenever security firms retire older signatures, they open a hole through which old attacks can instantly reappear, Ollmann said.

"Antivirus systems can handle tens of thousands of new signatures without blinking, but after a few hundred thousand they begin to struggle a bit," he wrote in a blog post this week. "Now, with several hundred thousand new virus strains each year (and increasing faster than Moore’s Law), things are getting pretty creaky."

Security vendors are at a disadvantage, because it costs nothing for attackers to append the latest exploit to their attack systems, keeping all the old attack methods in place as well, Ollmann said.

"The consequences for all of us are that old exploits (and the threats they represent) will never disappear - and there continues to be a steady supply of hosts vulnerable to flaws for which patches have existed for half a decade," he wrote in the blog post.

IBM ISS advised companies to think twice about retiring their old, creaking protection systems, but instead to evaluate more efficient protection models such as heuristic engines.

"Instead of a one-for-one signature protection model, more advanced heuristic engines can be used to protect the entire threat class," Ollmann wrote in the white paper.

Spam Fighters Hit Criminals’ Weak Spot

Is the fight against spam horribly misguided?

For years, spam haters have relied on junk-mail filters and Internet blacklists, but lately, some are saying it’s time for a change in tactics.

Their answer: follow the money. And that means going after the Web sites where spammers sell their pharmaceuticals and watches and male enhancement products.

Misguided or not, it’s pretty easy to argue that the fight against spam has been a losing proposition of late. At the end of last year, mail administrators noticed a big spike in the amount of spam flooding their in-boxes. Between July 1 and the end of the year, spam jumped to nearly 60 percent of all e-mail traffic monitored by Symantec Corp., and many administrators say it makes up an even greater percentage of e-mail now.

Spam filtering is not the answer, said Garth Bruen, who runs a volunteer project focused on taking down the Web sites run by spammers. Bruen tracks down the ISPs and domain name registrars used by spammers and arranges to have their sites shut down.

"This problem is not going to go away if you ignore it. Blocking and filtering is just a jacked-up technological form of ignoring," he said. "What you want to do is report it and make it difficult for these people to exist on the Net and do their transactions."

Earlier this month, researchers at the University of California, San Diego, endorsed Bruen’s position, saying that antispam fighters could really hurt the spammers’ bottom lines by targeting their Web sites.

"If there was more diligence in taking down the Web sites, that would have an effect on overall spam," said Chris Fleizach, a research assistant at UC San Diego.

Bruen says current approaches to spam fighting evolved out of a different era - before spam was widely used for online fraud or delivering malicious software. "When this problem started out, people were annoyed, and a lot of the junk mail at that time was urban legends and chain letters and stuff that wasn’t as much of a threat as it is now," he said.

Over the past four years, Bruen has tried to move the fight to a new front with his project KnujOn (that’s No Junk backwards, for those who aren’t into word games), which has helped shut down more than 30,000 spammer Web sites. The project asks volunteers to send in their spam, and it uses these submissions to build a large database linking sites to known spammers. To date, it has helped take down more than 32,000 of these junk mail sites.

When the project launched, KnujOn tracked just a few thousand Web sites in its database, but that number has now grown to several hundred thousand. Interestingly, the total number of spamming groups has remained constant - somewhere around 50. "There really aren’t many people involved in this," Bruen said.

That’s one reason why people like Bruen think that they can make a real difference by targeting the Web. Though critics say that KnujOn may end up fighting the same war of attrition that has already occurred with e-mail blocking, Bruen thinks he can eventually wear the spammers out.

"There’s a point of exhaustion where they run out of places to go," he said.

KnujOn isn’t the only group targeting spammer Web sites. Earlier this month, Computer Cops LLC, the company that runs the PIRT (Phishing Incident Reporting and Termination) phishing take-down program, expanded its efforts to and began doing the same thing.

Computer Cops believes many of the spamming groups are responsible for a lot of other online crime. "We’re trying to take a look at all of the Internet crime out there and do criminal profiles," said Paul Laudanski, the company’s owner and the leader of the PIRT project. Crime-fighting groups that focus only on spam or phishing don’t get the full picture, he added. "If one organization is only focusing on one thing, they’re missing a lot of criminal activity."

Scott Conti recently signed on as one of KnujOn’s 1300 registered contributors because he liked the project’s Web-centric approach. "There aren’t many people going back to the source," said Conti, the director of information technology at Greenfield Community College, in Greenfield, Massachusetts. "That’s what I thought was interesting about it. They are actually trying to take a proactive approach by going after the sites and going after the ISPs that are hosting them."

Greenfield College is now contributing between 50 and 100 spam samples per week to KnujOn, and in return it gets back information it can use to blacklist spam sites.

The college needs all the help it can get. About 96 percent of the 90,000 e-mail messages processed each day by Greenfield’s IT department are spam, Conti said.

It’s one of his biggest headaches, Conti said. "We probably get more vocal complaining about spam than just about any other problem we’re likely to have."

Tots Getting Internet Identity At Birth

Besides leaving the hospital with a birth certificate and a clean bill of health, baby Mila Belle Howells got something she won’t likely use herself for several years: her very own Internet domain name.

Likewise newborn Bennett Pankow joined his four older siblings in getting his own Internet moniker. In fact, before naming his child, Mark Pankow checked to make sure "BennettPankow.com" hadn’t already been claimed.

"One of the criteria was, if we liked the name, the domain had to be available," Pankow said. It was, and Pankow quickly grabbed Bennett’s online identity.

A small but growing number of parents are getting domain names for their young kids, long before they can do more than peck aimlessly at a keyboard.

It’s not known exactly how many, but the practice is no longer limited to parents in Web design or information technology.

They worry that the name of choice might not be available by the time their babies become teens or adults, just as someone claimed the ".com" for Britney Spears' 11-month-old son before she could.

The trend hints at the potential importance of domain names in establishing one's future digital identity.

Think of how much a typical teen's online life now revolves around Facebook or News Corp.'s MySpace. Imagine if one day the domain could take you directly to those social-networking profiles, blogs, photo albums and more.

"It is the starting point for your online identity," said Warren Adelman, president of registration company GoDaddy.com Inc., which sells basic domain name packages for about $9 a year. "We do believe the domain name is the foundation upon which all the other Internet services are based."

Hundreds of companies sell domain names with suffixes like ".com," ".org" and ".info," which individuals can then link to personal Web sites and e-mail accounts. Parents simply visit one of those companies' Web sites, search for the name they want and, if no one else has claimed it yet, buy it on the spot with a credit card.

There's no guarantee, though, that domain names will have as central a role in online identity. After all, with search engines getting smarter, Internet users can simply type the name of a person into Google.

"Given the pace of change on the Internet, it strikes me as a pretty impressive leap of faith that we're going to use exactly the same system and the same tools ... 15 to 20 years from today," said Peter Grunwald, whose Grunwald Associates firm specializes in researching kids and technology.

Still, even if the effort is for naught, $9 a year is cheap compared with the cost of diapers and college tuition.

Besides providing an easy-to-remember Web address, the domain name makes possible e-mail addresses without awkward numbers - as in "JohnSmith24", because 23 other John Smiths had beaten your child to Google Inc.'s Gmail service.

Parents not ready to commit or knowledgeable enough on how to buy a domain, though, are at least trying their luck with Microsoft Corp.'s Hotmail or Gmail.

Melissa Coleman of Springfield, Mass., grabbed Hotmail addresses for her two kids. She said the kids' grandparents occasionally send e-greeting cards to those accounts, and she sends thank you notes for gifts in her child's voice.

"I think it's great that it's so loud and that it came with an actual WORKING MICROPHONE ... and I'm not sure what 'annoying' means, but I'm sure it means that Mommy loves it too!!!!," read one message to Grandpa.

She said she logs in at least once every month to keep the accounts active and plans to save all messages for when her children get older.

Tony Howells, a business consultant in Salt Lake City, got a Gmail address along with the domain name for his daughter, believing people would enjoy seeing "an e-mail address pop up for an 8-month-old who is obviously not

equipped to use it."

Although some parents have yet to use the domain names they've bought, others are sending visitors to baby photos, blogs and other personal sites. Domain name owners have a variety of options to have their personal sites hosted, typically for free or less than $10 a month. They include baby-geared services like TotSites.com and BabyHomePages.net.

Theresa Pinder initially received a domain name as a Christmas gift from her son's godparents and gives it out to friends and family who want updates.

"People are like, 'Wow. He already has his own Web site,'" said Pinder, a physician assistant in Phoenix.

There are downsides to all this, though: An easy-to-remember domain also makes a child easier for strangers to find. Chances are one only needs to know a child's name and add ".com."

Pankow, a database administrator in Phoenix, said that was one concern keeping him from using the domains he bought for his five children, including a 9-year-old daughter.

"I'd want to research and try to figure out how easy it is to find out what school she goes to and where she lives" based on the Web site and domain name, Pankow said.

GoDaddy and many other registration companies offer proxy services that let domain name buyers register anonymously. Otherwise, the person's name, address and other contact information are publicly searchable.

Notwithstanding the privacy concerns, Adelman said domain names for kids have become more and more popular as parents start to get domains for their business or family and realize how difficult it is to find ".com" names not yet claimed.

But the numbers are still relatively low. Our Baby Homepage, which lets parents set up personal baby pages with photos and greetings, says only 10 percent of its customers have bought their own domains. A similar service, Baby's First Site, considered selling domains for parents but didn't get much interest.

Brian Vannoy, founder of TotSites, said parents might need more lessons on safety measures such as how to password-protect sites. But he believes the hurdles can be overcome once parents who are less-savvy about technology see the benefits.

"It's easy to remember," Vannoy said. "Everybody knows the new baby's name."

Internet Radio Drama's Latest Episode

When we last left the radio drama of royalty holders battling with webcasters, there were offers, accusations, political lobbying, and PR spinning aplenty. In the current episode, SoundExchange - representing a group of record companies and musicians - has announced an agreement with the Digital Media Association (DiMA) on several issues.

The most important item in the agreement, announced Thursday, is that participants agree to "form a committee to evaluate the issue of stream-ripping and potential technological solutions to it," according to a statement by DiMA.

Earlier demands by SoundExchange had included a more rigorous insistence that stations use a particular technology or that they develop one to prevent the copying of music streams. The stations had protested that this plan would place an unfair burden on them.

Mike McGuire, an analyst with industry research firm Gartner, called the stream-ripping provision "an important breakthrough," because placing the burden on webcasters to find a technological solution was "too much to ask."

The agreement also addresses a maximum for the per-channel caps. The rules established with the Copyright Royalty Board (CRB) had required each webcaster to pay a $500 minimum fee against royalties for each station or channel.

The new agreement sets a $50,000 cap overall on the total amount of minimum fees from a company, if it offers more than 100 channels. The agreement also requires webcasters to provide SoundExchange with a reporting of all songs played, rather than just a sampling.

SoundExchange noted that the agreement applies only to those who have signed it - its own members and those of DiMA. DiMA members include AOL, RealNetworks, Yahoo, Microsoft, and Pandora.

The SaveNetRadio coalition said it endorsed this agreement.

But another offer by SoundExchange, made public on Tuesday, received harsh words from small webcasters. In that offer, SoundExchange said that "qualified small webcasters" could continue operating through 2010 with the same rates they had received since 1998, but only for music from members of SoundExchange. Music by nonmembers "would still be subject to the new rates."

It defined small webcasters as those with total revenues of $1.25 million or less and a certain audience size, and said they would be subject to royalty fees of either 10 or 12 percent of revenue, which would be substantially less than the new rates set several months ago by the CRB. Small webcasters that did not agree to these terms by September 14 would be subject to the higher rates.

Various small webcasters have issued statements rejecting the offer. ThereIsNoRadio, a service of live, interactive talk and music shows, said in a statement that the offer is "just more propaganda" designed to relieve pressure from Congress for "an equitable deal."

Because the offer applies only to SoundExchange members - including 20,000 recording artists and 3,500 labels - ThereIsNoRadio said it does not account for the fact that 70 percent of all music played on Web stations is by independent, non-SoundExchange artists.

ThereIsNoRadio said that if the offer were widely accepted, it would "lead most small webcasters to focus mostly on the major label bands, leaving independent artists and labels with far fewer outlets." ThereIsNoRadio also said the deal is an attempt by SoundExchange to "corner" Internet

radio stations so that they can "increase airplay for the major labels."

Rusty Hodge, who runs a small Web station called SomaFM, told the Associated Press that the definition of "small station" was too small. He said that the U.S. Small Business Administration's standard for a small broadcasting company - $6 million or less in annual revenue - should be used instead.

Gartner's McGuire said that, whatever the final standard for a small webcaster, the latest round indicated that the larger webcasters were diverging from the smaller ones. "It appears," he said, "that the large guys are going to be able to sign off on this."

Sleepy? Cut Out Late-Night Internet and TV

People who spend more pre-bedtime hours using the Internet or watching television are more likely to report that they don't get enough sleep, even though they sleep almost as long as people who spend fewer pre-bedtime hours in front of a computer or television screen, survey findings show.

"While many people use electronic media, such as the Internet, it should be noted that the longer media use before sleep can trigger (self-perceived) insufficient sleep," lead researcher Dr. Nakamori Suganuma, of Osaka University, Japan, told Reuters Health.

He and colleagues obtained data on self-perceived sleep problems and the use of electronic media prior to bedtime from a total of 5,875 Japanese respondents to two separate Internet-based surveys. Their findings are published in the journal Sleep and Biological Rhythms.

Nearly half of the respondents associated their lack of sleep with electronic media use before bedtime. Those reporting longer electronic media use were also more likely to report insufficient sleep.

Overall, 29 percent of light users (less than 1.5 hours) listed electronic media use as a possible cause of their insufficient sleep. By comparison, 40 percent of medium users (1.5 to 3 hours) and 54 percent of heavy users (more than 3 hours) said the same.

However, longer Internet and television use before bedtime did not correlate with less actual sleep. While heavy users averaged about 3 more hours in front of computer or television screens than light users, the heavy users averaged only about 12 minutes less pre-workday sleep time than light users.

Notably, Suganuma said, "Internet use affected self-perceived insufficient sleep more than TV watching...not only in younger Internet users but also in middle-aged or aged Internet users."

Up to 38 percent of the respondents listed accessing the Internet far into the night as a possible cause for their sleep disturbance, while about 25 percent said watching television far into the night caused their sleep problems.

The findings suggest that while heavy computer and television use before bedtime has a small effect on sleep duration, it may have a more

significant effect on "sleep demand and sleep quality," Suganuma notes.

Google Opens Click-Fraud Site

Google Inc. has unveiled a Web site "resource center" focused on the thorny issue of click fraud, which many consider a potential threat to the company’s main source of revenue: pay-per-click advertising.

Google developed the new Ad Traffic Quality Resource Center primarily to give its advertisers a single place to find Google’s information about click fraud, said Shuman Ghosemajumder, business product manager for trust and safety at Google, on Friday.

In the pay-per-click format, advertisers pay every time someone clicks on their ads, which are linked to a Web page. Click fraud happens when companies click on competitors’ ads to drive up their ad spending. Another common click-fraud practice is for Web publishers to click on their sites’ ads to increase their commissions.

With some organizations estimating click-fraud incidence at over 30 percent in general, Google has gone on the offensive in researching this topic and stating publicly what it is doing and what is the extent of the problem in its own ad network.

For example, Google proactively monitors its network for what it calls invalid clicks, which include not only malicious clicks but also innocent practices that may look like click fraud, such as clicking on an ad twice.

It has concluded that less than 10 percent of clicks on Google ads are invalid, and that only 0.02 percent are declared invalid as a result of advertisers’ complaints.

Along the way, Google has locked horns at times with companies that provide click-fraud monitoring and measurement services, questioning the validity and thoroughness of their methodologies.

The resource center, unveiled Thursday evening, is the latest in a series of click-fraud tools Google has been making available to its advertisers.

Originally slated for March, the resource center’s debut was delayed as a result of shifting priorities within the group in charge of click fraud, Ghosemajumder said.

For example, the group decided to prioritize organizing a click-fraud forum for Google advertisers that was held at the company’s headquarters in May, he said. A similar event will be held later this month in Google’s New York City offices, he said.

Already in place is a service called IP Filtering, which lets advertisers "blacklist" certain IP (Internet Protocol) addresses for whatever reason, such as suspicion of click fraud or simply because their clicks never lead to a sale, he said.

In mid-2006, Google began reporting to advertisers the number of invalid clicks to their campaigns, as well as what percentage they

comprise of all clicks.

Google plans to beef up these reports with the amount of money Google didn't bill the advertiser by detecting and discarding invalid clicks. This was also slated originally for March.

Click fraud has led advertisers to sue Google, Yahoo Inc. and other providers of pay per click ads. Google reached a landmark settlement of a click-fraud class action lawsuit last year which many described as a big victory for the company. A loss could have likely cost the company hundreds of millions of dollars, but instead Google managed to settle the case for US$90 million.

As part of the deal, all but several hundred Google advertisers forfeited their right to sue the company over click-fraud instances dating back to 2002.

The settlement also allowed Google, which admitted to no wrongdoing or liability, to only pay a third of the settlement in cash - all for plaintiffs' attorney fees - with the rest taking the form of credits for advertisers.

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